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SKEETER'S AWESOME ADVENTURE

Story by Debbie Hume
Illustrations by Alicia Michael
Layout by Mimi Lo





United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service helps people help the land through scientifically based, locally led, voluntary, natural resource conservation efforts.

Wise stewardship of Missouri's natural resources benefits each of us through a healthy environment and productive lands.

This publication was produced and printed by:

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
601 Business Loop 70 West, Suite 250,
Columbia, MO 65203

www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov

September 2010



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About this booklet:

This booklet is the result of volunteer efforts through the Earth Team. Earth Team volunteers donate their time and talents to help USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) carry out its mission of conserving and protecting our natural resources.

For more information about the Earth Team or about how NRCS helps people help the land, contact your local service center. You can find a service center near you by looking in the phone book under "US Government, Department of Agriculture," or visit www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov and click on the "Find a Service Center" link.

Special thanks to the South Missouri Water Quality Project Office in Ozark, Missouri, for making this booklet possible.

A colorful illustration of a snake and a bear cub. The snake, with a pattern of green, yellow, and pinkish-red segments, is coiled around the cub. The bear cub is light brown with a white belly and has a small tuft of hair on its head. It is wearing a dark blue vest over a light green shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape.

SKEETER'S AWESOME ADVENTURE

Story by Debbie Hunter

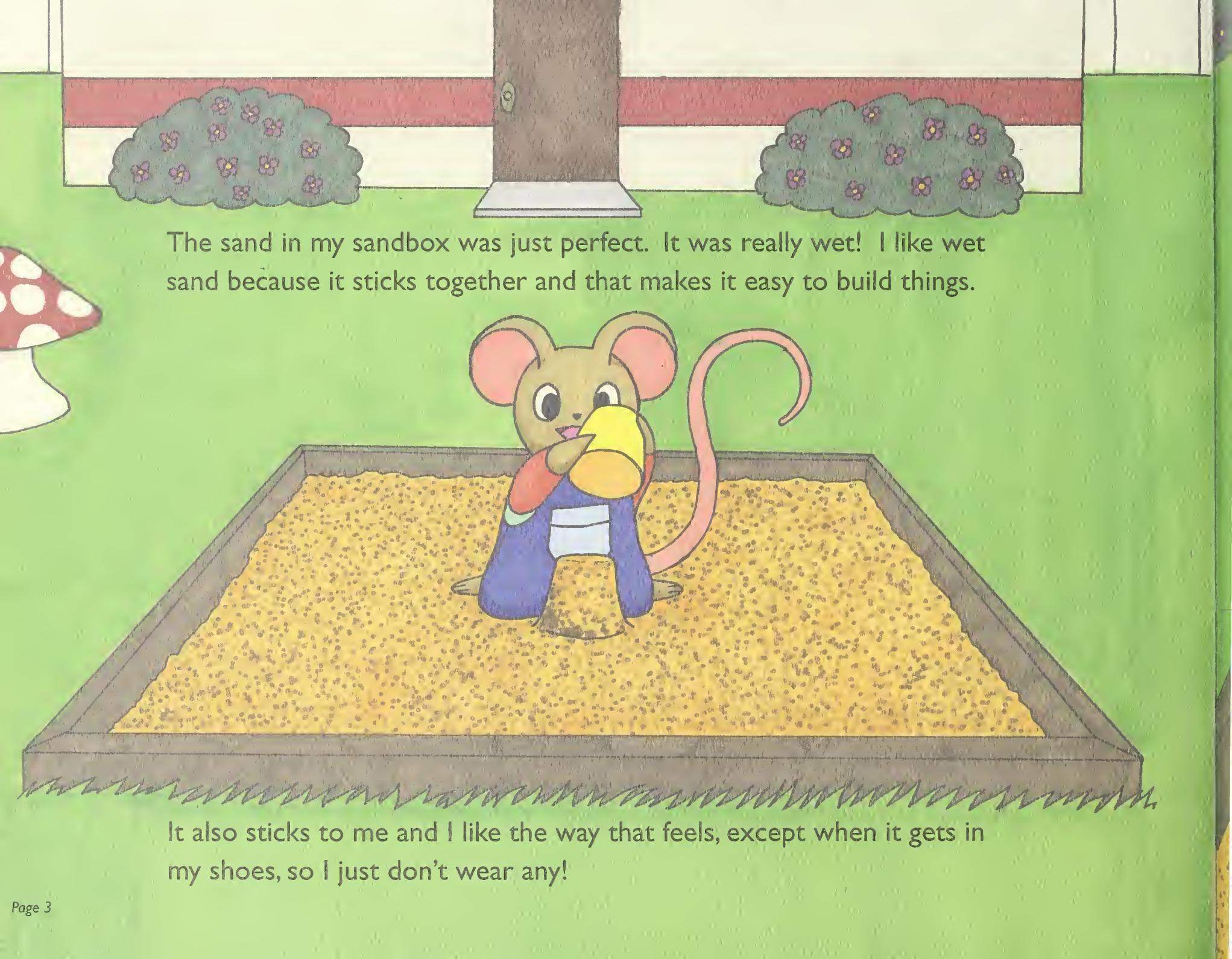
Illustrations by Alicia Michael

Layout by Mimi Lor

“Mom, it stopped raining! Can I go outside and play in my sandbox?”

“Sure Skeeter. But take your raincoat and hat in case it starts raining again.”





The sand in my sandbox was just perfect. It was really wet! I like wet sand because it sticks together and that makes it easy to build things.

It also sticks to me and I like the way that feels, except when it gets in my shoes, so I just don't wear any!

I was having fun when suddenly I saw a flying machine streak across the sky and head straight for my yard. As it got closer I could see something waving at me.





The machine landed in the yard and a water drop jumped out.

It said, "Hi. I'm Husky Hydrogen Oxygen. But you can just call me H₂O. H₂O is a scientific word for water."

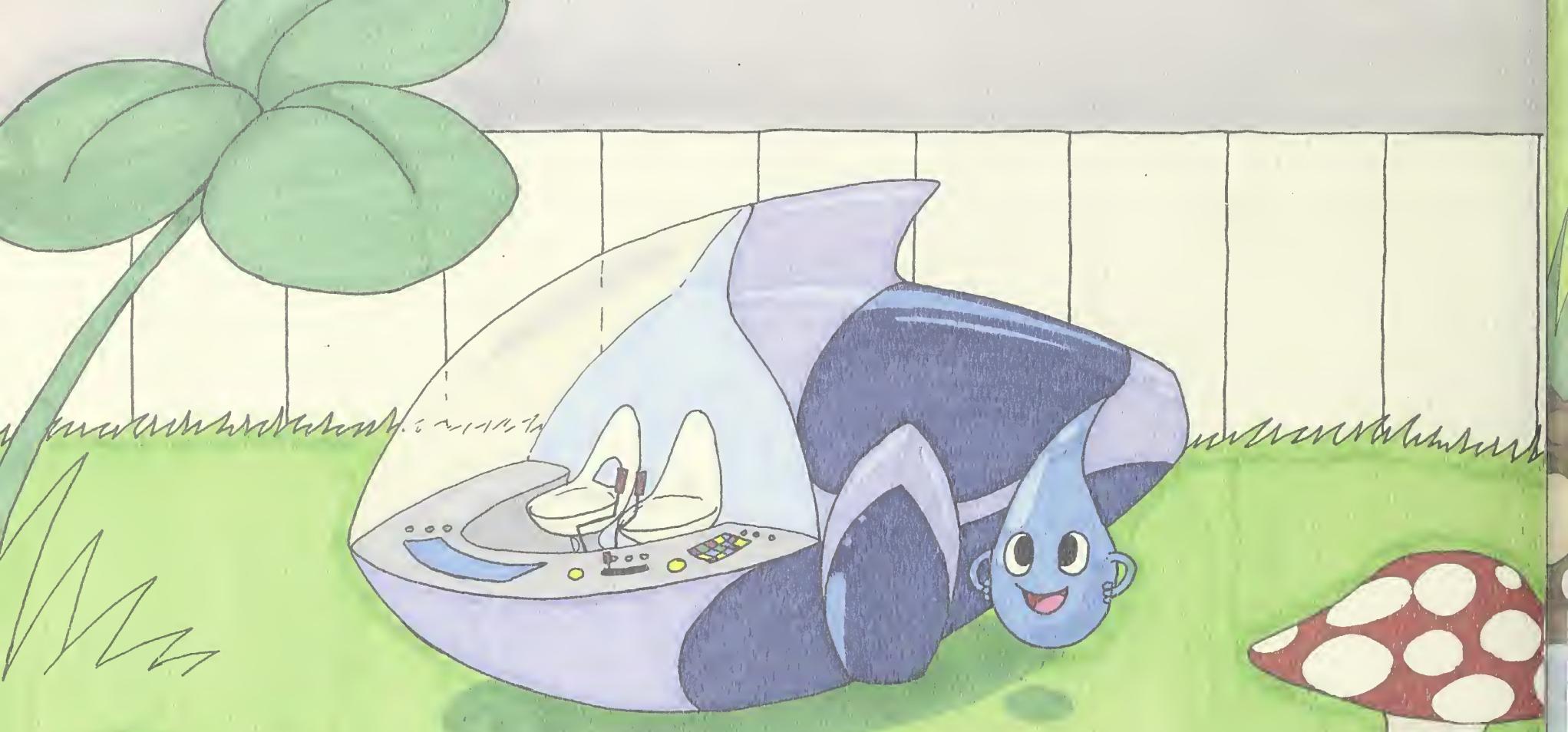




"I am a water adventurer and travel in a big circle called the water cycle. Would you like to go on a trip with me? My Hydro-Machine can take us."

"Awesome," I said. "Let's go!"



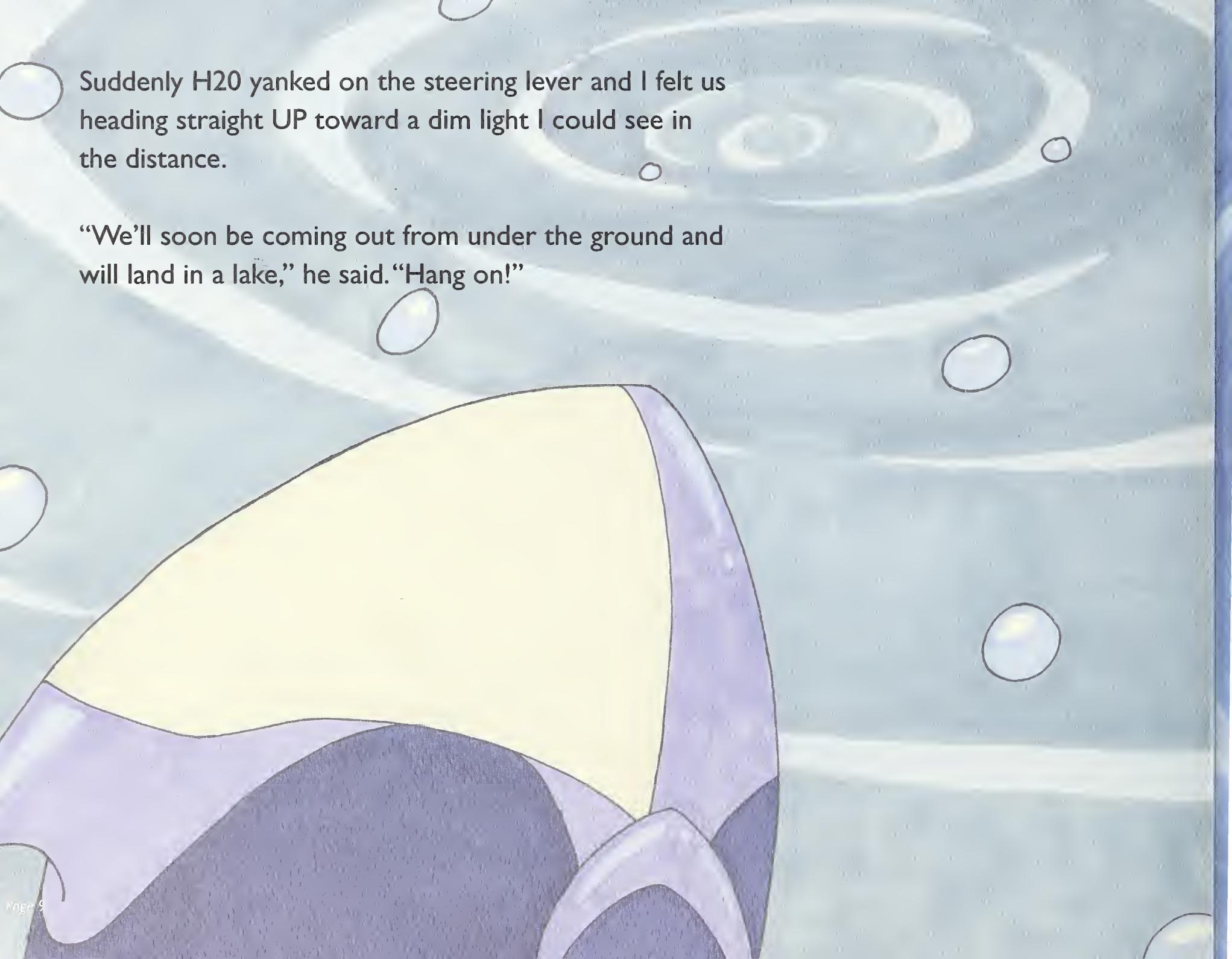


"Well brush some of that sand off your clothes before you get into my Hydro-Machine," H2O said. "Put on your seatbelt because first we are heading down UNDER the ground and it is going to get BUMPY!"



We bumped our way through the soil until we arrived at an aquifer filled with groundwater.

It was **VERY** dark and quiet underground.



Suddenly H2O yanked on the steering lever and I felt us heading straight UP toward a dim light I could see in the distance.

“We'll soon be coming out from under the ground and will land in a lake,” he said. “Hang on!”

The ride on the lake was much smoother than under the ground, but the sun was bright and it started getting very hot inside the Hydro-Machine.



I was starting to sweat when the machine started shaking and rattling.



“H₂O, what’s happening? I think we are rising into the sky!”

“We sure are! The sun warmed the water in the lake and caused it to change from a liquid to a gas and start rising. That is called EVAPORATION.

“OH NO! Are we really heading up into the clouds?”

“Yes Skeeter!” said H₂O.
“But you will be OK!”

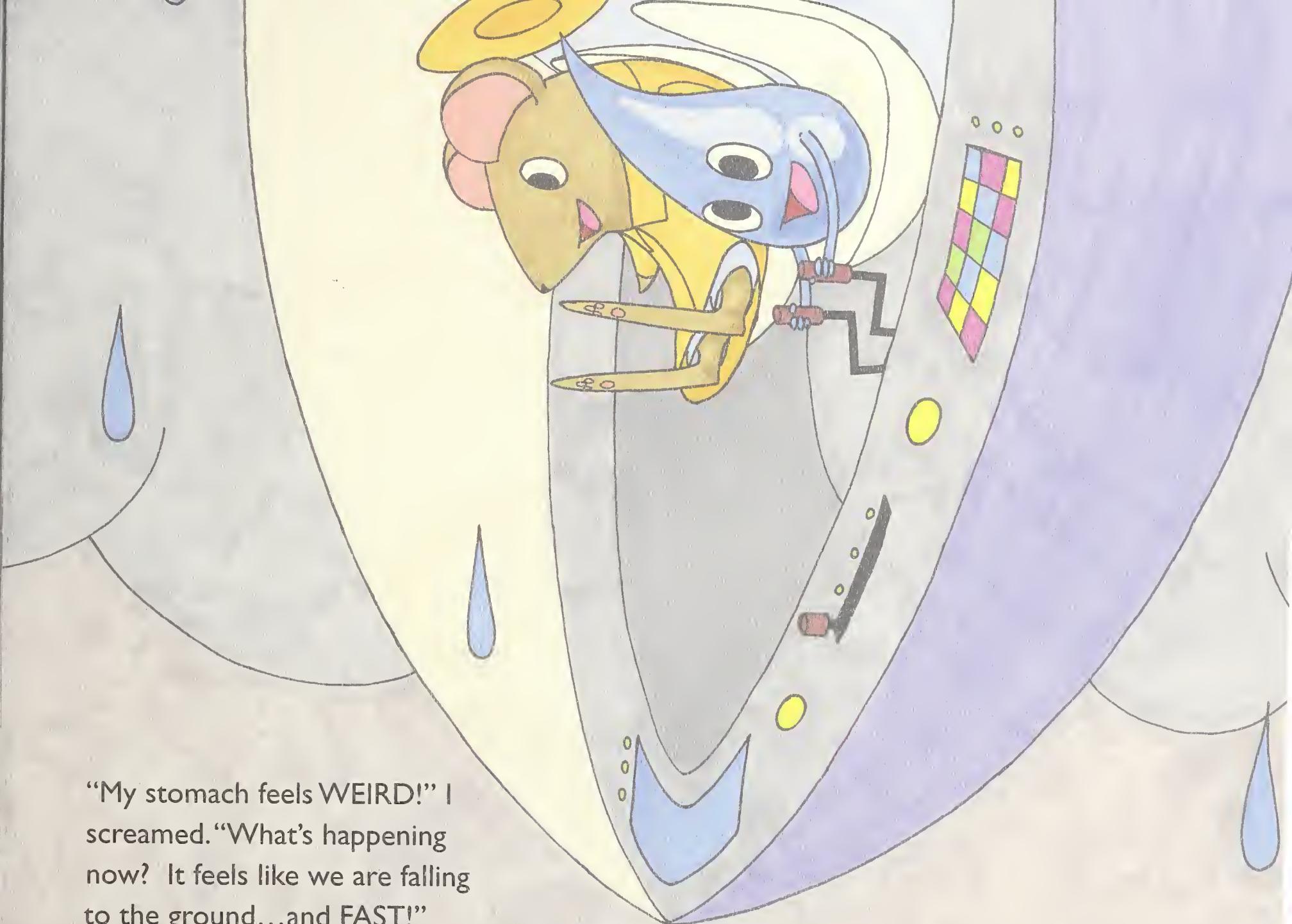
"When the warm gas rises and reaches the cool air in the sky, it will change back into a liquid and form a cloud. That is called CONDENSATION."

"Do you see the tiny water droplets bouncing around in these clouds? They will start sticking together and make larger droplets. See how foggy and cold it is up here!"

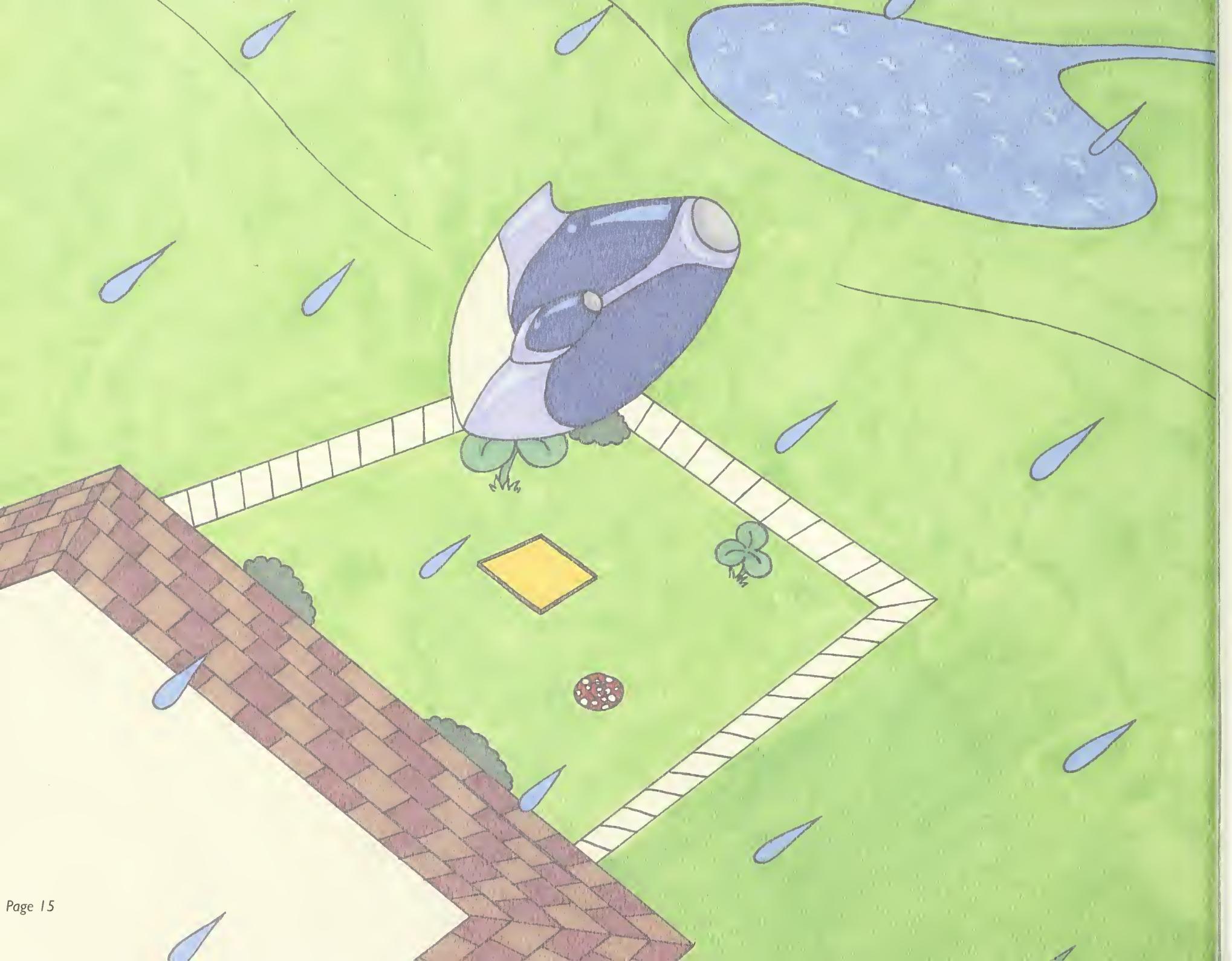




I was beginning to get the shivers when H2O yanked on the steering levers and the Hydro-Machine turned over and headed DOWN.



"My stomach feels WEIRD!" I screamed. "What's happening now? It feels like we are falling to the ground...and FAST!"



“We are, so HANG ON!” he explained. “When water droplets in clouds stick together, they become very heavy and the clouds cannot hold them so they fall to the ground as rain, snow, sleet, or hail. That is called PRECIPITATION. Today it is warm outside so it is falling as rain. The rain will collect on the surface of the ground in the oceans, rivers, and lakes. That is called COLLECTION. Of course some will sink into the ground too and become groundwater.”

“Well, that’s great, but do you know how to land this thing?” I asked. “The ground, surface, or WHATEVER you want to call it is coming FAST!”

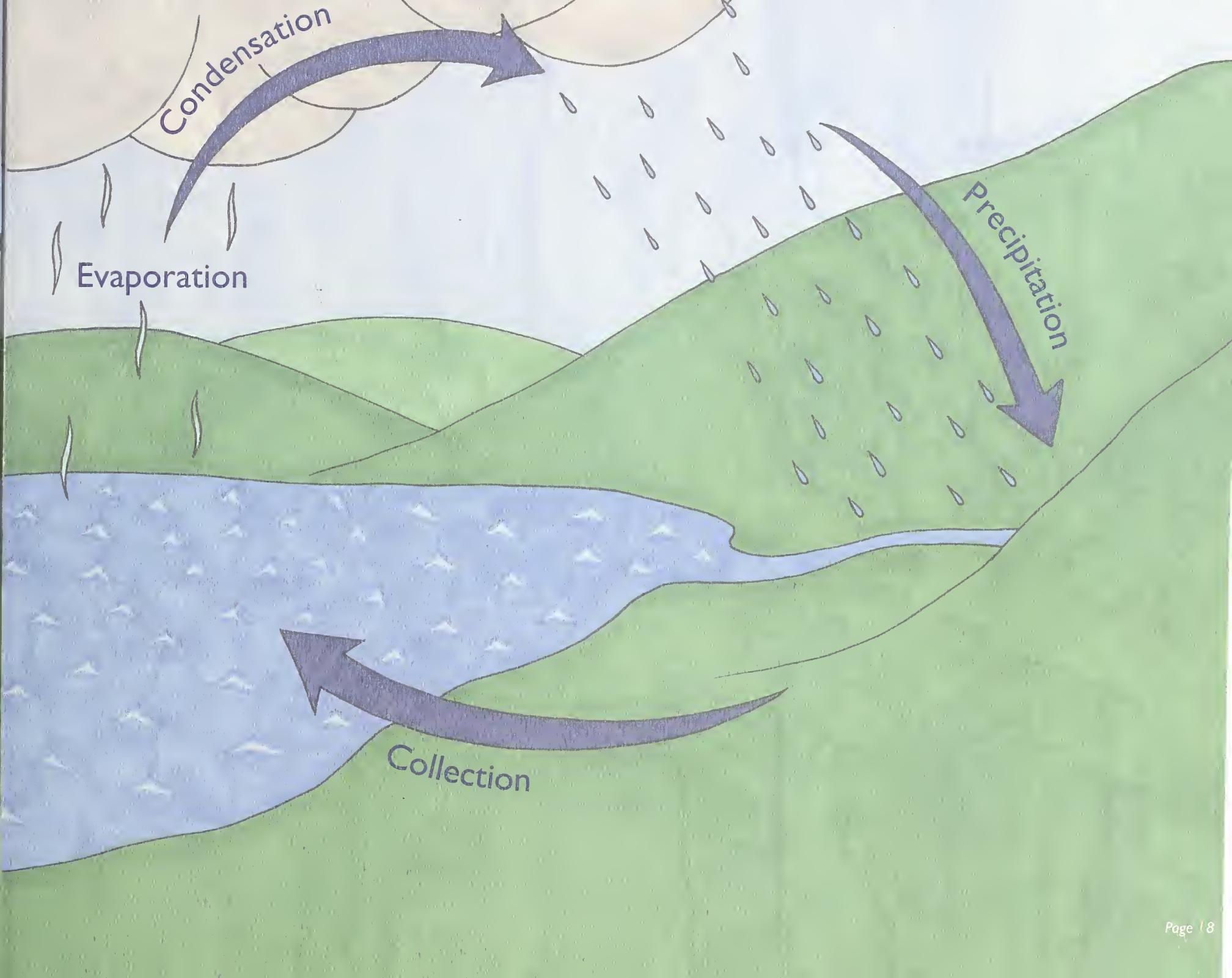
I closed my eyes as we came in for the landing. To my surprise, we did not crash!



I jumped out as H2O said, "The water on earth has traveled through the water cycle since the earth was formed. Since the usable water on earth is limited, we need to remember to take care of it and use it wisely. We share it with all living things."

"I will remember," I said as I waved goodbye.
"Thanks for the AWESOME adventure!"







The End



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About the Author



Debbie Hunter wrote "Skeeter's Awesome Adventure," an exciting adventure about a little mouse who travels through the water cycle, while a student at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield. As a student in a children's literature class, Debbie became an Earth Team volunteer and participated in the USDA-NRCS Early Childhood Education Program through the South

Missouri Water Quality Project in Ozark, MO. As a volunteer, Debbie wrote this story through the program partnership to introduce the water cycle concept to children. She now attends Missouri State University where she is pursuing a degree in Elementary Education.

About the Illustrator



Alicia Michael, an Earth Team volunteer and Ozarks Technical Community College art student, answered a call-to-artists issued by the South Missouri Water Quality Project and was excited when selected to illustrate "Skeeter's Awesome Adventure." "I never dreamed I'd be selected as the illustrator," she said. Alicia plans to continue her education and pursue a degree which combines

her interests in science illustration and animal conservation. "My goal is to conduct research in the field of birds of prey, and someday illustrate a book on falcons, hawks, and eagles," she explained. Alicia resides in Springfield.

About the Graphic Designer



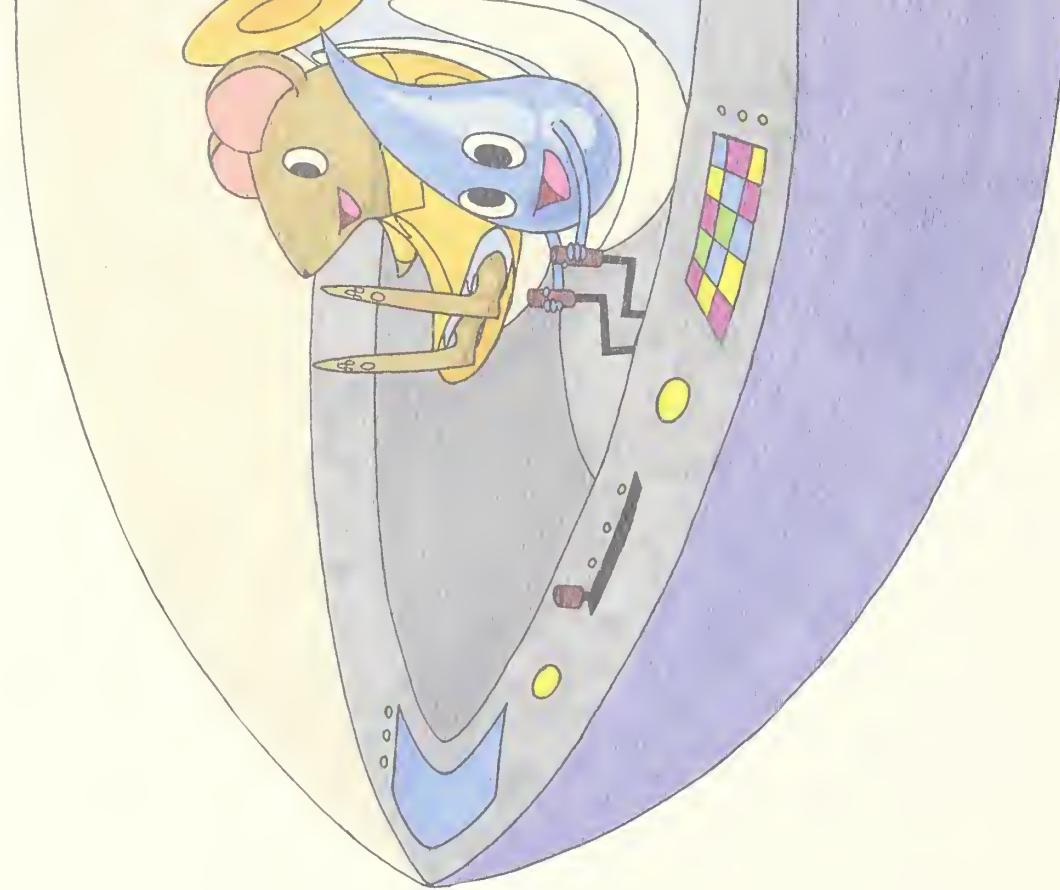
Mimi Lor organized and designed the book layout for "Skeeter's Awesome Adventure." As a student in the Art and Design Program at Missouri State University, Mimi got involved in the South Missouri Water Quality Project partnership. She became an Earth Team Volunteer and used her knowledge and passion to finalize the book. Unlike her

many projects, this opportunity allowed her to design for children. Mimi plans to graduate with a BFA in Graphic Design in Fall 2010.

Photos by **Monica Phillips**, Earth Team Volunteer



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